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C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 005496

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/05/2016

TAGS: PREL PGOV MEPN UNSC UNGA ARABL EG

SUBJECT: ARAB LEAGUE MINISTERIAL DEMARCHE RECEIVED WITH  
LITTLE ENTHUSIASM

REF: STATE 145279

Classified by Charge d'Affaires Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

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Summary  
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¶1. (C) The Charge delivered reftel demarche September 3 to MFA Assistant Minister Hani Khalaf, and separately to Arab League Chief of Staff Hisham Youssef. With regards to UNSCR 1701, both Khalaf and Youssef welcomed news of USG humanitarian and military support for Lebanon and registered strong pleas for the U.S. to press Israel to lift its air and sea blockades. Neither offered positions on the Venezuela-Guatemala competition for a UN Security Council seat, but were critical of U.S. efforts at the United Nations on Darfur. Regarding an Arab League proposal to bring the Arab-Israeli dispute to the Security Council, Youssef expressed strong disappointment with Washington's lack of support for the initiative. Khalaf distinguished the Arab Minister's proposal from the Amre Moussa proposal and urged U.S. consideration. End summary.

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Egyptian MFA Assistant Minister  
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¶2. (C) During separate September 3 meetings with MFA Assistant Minister for Arab Affairs Hani Khalaf and Arab League Chief of Staff Hisham Youssef, the DCM drew from reftel background and talking points to discuss key items for the upcoming Arab League foreign ministers meeting in Cairo September 5-7. On Lebanon and UNSCR 1701, Khalaf welcomed news of U.S. humanitarian and military support for Lebanon, though he registered a strong plea for Washington to press Israel to lift its air and sea blockades on Lebanon to "ease civilian suffering." Khalaf did not offer views regarding the Venezuela-Guatemala competition for a UN Security Council seat.

¶3. (C) On Darfur, Khalaf complained that the Security Council had passed UNSCR 1706 too hastily and without sufficient consultation with neighbors (read: Arab states) or Sudan. This haste, he said, left Arab leaders with little room to maneuver Khartoum toward acceptance of a UN role in Darfur. The Charge noted that intense consultations had gone on for months and that Arab states had done little to persuade Bashir to moderate his positions. Khalaf offered little hope that the GOE would pressure the Bashir government on Darfur, despite the urgency of the situation and the importance of facilitating the introduction of UN forces there.

¶4. (C) Drawing a distinction between the Amre Moussa/Arab League initiative and the August 21 Arab ministerial decision

to seek a ministerial meeting at the UNSC on the Middle East, Khalaf asked if Foreign Minister Ahmed Aboul Gheit would receive a separate response to his recent verbal message to Secretary Rice. The FM, he said, had personally urged the

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Secretary - via Egyptian Ambassador Fahmy in Washington - to

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respond favorably to the ministers, August 21 proposal. Parsing the language of the demarche, he argued against treating the conflicts in the Middle East individually. Rather, he said, they should be treated as a whole. Khalaf stressed that the purpose of a UNSC meeting would be to promote new solutions and establish timetables for the peace process, not to criticize the United States or Israel.

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Arab League Chief of Staff  
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¶5. (C) Youssef expressed deep disappointment with the USG response to the Arab League proposal for a Security Council Ministerial on the peace process, querying whether the U.S. demurral was a function of timing, venue, or policy. He stressed that the AL proposal was not aimed at blaming or discrediting either Israel or the United States. On the contrary, it was intended to revive the peace process, "keeping doors open for other options that may allow this to happen." He insisted that timing for a Ministerial meeting during the UNGA was critical because: "the current situation in the Middle East is explosive; this meeting could create an improved atmosphere for implementing UNSCR 1701." Youssef added that an Arab ministerial committee would meet September 6 in Cairo to discuss the proposal further. He expected that meeting to produce new elements, but declined to share specifics. He strongly urged the U.S. to re-consider its decision and left the room briefly to convey the U.S. response to Secretary General Amre Moussa. When he returned,

Youssef said Moussa had instructed him to reclama the USG decision.

¶6. (C) On Lebanon and UNSCR 1701, Youssef similarly welcomed news of U.S. humanitarian and military support for Lebanon, and requested the U.S. press Israel to lift its land/naval blockade on Lebanese ports. Regarding Darfur, Youssef stated that a Sudan ministerial committee would meet September 6 in Cairo and discuss next steps in responding to UNSCR 1706. He declined to speculate on likely outcomes.

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